INSIDE OUT – PART ONE
OUR MISSION: IT'S TIME TO BE BOLD!
ACTS 11 - LARRY L. THOMPSON (2010)

Introduction:
Today we begin a new series that will shape the direction of our fellowship for years to come. I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST WE MUST COME TO GRIPS WITH OUR MISSION. Everything we read and hear today absolutely demands that we understand this... IT'S TIME TO BE BOLD!

According to churchologist, those who study the trends of church life in our nation, they tell us there are THREE CRITICAL ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH IN AMERICA...

1. THE LOCAL CHURCH IS NO LONGER THE ONLY OUTLET FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH.
2. CHURCHES MUST DEVELOP RELATIONAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED OUTREACH. The old idea of the week long revivals or the giant outdoor crusades is not the most effective way to reach this generation. We MUST DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AND GET INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY.
3. CHRISTIANS MUST BE BETTER EQUIPPED TO SHARE JESUS CHRIST IN THE MARKETPLACE.

How is FBC going to address these issues? How did the early church address these issues? Take your Bibles and open them to Acts 11. The book of Acts is history of church and the issues they dealt with are in many respects parallel with the challenges we face today in the 21st Century. IN ACTS CHAPTER 11 WE READ HOW THE WORLD-WIDE CHURCH WAS LAUNCHED FROM THIS MAJOR CITY. “The believers were first called Christians in Antioch.” As I read Acts 11 I believe their strategy is much like the mission I will outline for you today. For instance:

WHY DO WE EXIST? We exist to win people to Jesus Christ; to help make followers of Christ. READ ACTS 11:19-20:
“Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews. 20 However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. 21 The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.” Acts 11:19-21 (NLT)

If we are going to win people to Jesus Christ and help people become fully devoted followers of Christ then we must find a way to penetrate this culture. How do we
penetrate the culture today with the gospel of Jesus Christ when the church is losing her influence? Here is something I want you to hear because I am going to repeat it several times throughout this message. We are going to penetrate this culture with the love and life of Jesus Christ... WHEN WE REALIZE... “IT IS TIME TO BE BOLD!”

I want to say that again and I want you to say the last word. IT IS TIME TO BE ________! I want you to say it like you mean it!

Miami-OU Football Game:

I want you to think about this illustration to help you understand the perspective of the church in our culture. Years ago when we lived in Oklahoma a friend of mine surprised me for my birthday and flew us with them to the Oklahoma – Miami Game in the old Orange Bowl. Talk about feeling like you were in enemy territory. I have never seen a more vocal or fearful group of people in my life. It was not fun to be the visiting team and by the way our team lost.

The church in our culture today is like “the visiting team.”

- America is the third largest mission field in the world.
- In 1990 14.3 million Americans never attended religious service; that number rose to 34.2 million in 20081
- 86% of the people in South Florida do not go to church on any given Sunday.

Yet, people are searching everywhere for spiritual answers in their life. People say, “Larry, 2010 is really tough; the economy has not picked up, people are hurting, and the nation seems to be polarized...” I would agree all that is true and yet it represents to us one of the greatest opportunities the church has experienced since the days of the early church. It may be the greatest opportunity in the history of Jesus Christ to offer hope and help to hurting people.

Tom Brady, QB for New England Patriots said, “Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still feel like there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey, man, this is what is. I reached my goal, my dream, my life.' Me, I think, 'God, it's got to be more than this.” He was then asked, "What's the answer?"

"I wish I knew. I wish I knew, I love playing football and I love being quarterback for this time. But at the same time, I think there are a lot of other parts about me that I'm trying to find.”2

A poll on Oprah's show asked her viewers this question: “What is your life's

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1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_United_States
2 http://www.wnd.com/index.php?pageId=45854
mission?” 70% of the people who responded to that poll had no idea. Zero!

My daughter, Taylor, has the pleasure of being the Executive Director of Communication for Brad Pitt’s organization, “Make It Right” and he is doing a remarkable work of selfless dedication in rebuilding homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in the 9th ward of New Orleans. However, even Mr. Pitt said in Rolling Stones article:

“I know all these things are supposed to seem important to us; the cars, the condo, our version of success, but if that’s the case why is the general feeling out there reflecting more isolation, desperation and loneliness? I don’t have the answers yet. I’m the guy who’s got everything; I’m sitting in it and I’m telling you that’s not it.”

Most Christians think that people all around us have everything they need and they don’t want to hear about the joy and peace that comes from being a follower of Christ and I’m here to tell you today that nothing can be further from the truth! SO HOW DO WE REACH OUT AND PENETRATE OUR CULTURE WITH THE WONDERFUL TRUTH OF JESUS CHRIST? WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT… IT’S TIME TO BE _____!

We get excited about all kinds of things: We are excited about the Dolphins, the Heat, the Hurricane, the Gators, the Seminoles, the Sooners… then why can’t we get excited about what Jesus Christ is doing in our lives and what He can do in the lives of others? Why can’t we share the same excitement about what God is doing in our church?

In Acts 11 we see where believers are scattered because of the stoning of Stephen. You would think this group of believers that scattered would have said, “We have to keep quiet or the same thing will happen to us!” BUT THEY DIDN’T! They said, God has sent 12 of us to Antioch and while we are here we need to try to make a difference in this culture by sharing the life of Jesus Christ. We can’t keep quiet about talking about Jesus Christ. Within 3 years 12 believers went to 100,000. They realized this was the TIME TO BE BOLD.

At FBC… we must realize this is the time for us to be BOLD in the witness of our faith in Jesus Christ. In order for us to be bold in our witness we must ask this question?

How do you see the ministry at First Baptist Church?

When you think of our ministry do you see our entire ministry happening HERE on this location? We have great facilities and you may think we have to get everything done

right “HERE!” Others may say, “I have more of a global vision and think our ministry ought to happen over “THERE” The truth is: We must see the ministry happening HERE, OVER THERE and EVERYWHERE!

If we are going to reach and build relationships with 86% of the people who do not go to ANY place of worship on the weekend then we must see where we live, where we work, where we go to school and where we play as our mission field. Our mission field is everywhere and in order to be effective and penetrate this culture we must realize…. IT’S TIME TO BE __________!

Today we must articulate and put laser focus on our MISSION STRATEGY! LET’S DEFINE IT AND THEN I WANT YOU TO MEMORIZE IT!

OUR MISSION IS TO WIN people to Jesus Christ; TRAIN believers to become followers of Christ; AND SEND his followers out to influence the world! (READ IT WITH ME AGAIN) THAT IS AS SIMPLE AS IT GETS AND STRAIGHT FROM THE BIBLE: MATT. 28:18-20

“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)

IF YOU DON’T REMEMBER THE ENTIRE MISSION OF OUR CHURCH THEN PLEASE REMEMBER THREE WORDS and the laser focus on: WIN – TRAIN - SEND!

THE WIN…

• We must put more focus on reaching people and we cannot shy away from remembering how important it is to reach men. This does not mean we are not interested in reaching the women. We know from every church study in the world that women are, for the most part, more spiritual than men. Our strategy must be enlarged to put a strong emphasis on reaching the men. In our culture we are almost evenly divided men and women, 51% to 49%. However in the church it is about 62% to 38% more women than men. Listen to these statistics from Focus on the Family:
  o When the CHILD accepts Christ, the rest of the family follows 7% of the time
  o When the MOTHER accepts Christ, the rest of the family follows 17% of the time
When the **FATHER** accepts Christ, the rest of the family follows 93% of the time.

**We need to reach men and help them to become the spiritual leaders of their home.** We want men to love their wife like Christ loved the church; to stay home, married to your wife and a father to your children so you can lead your kids in faith and to be a difference maker in the marketplace.

- **WE MUST REACH OUR NEIGHBORS TO CHANGE OUR CULTURE.** The success of our church will be known not just by the numbers we have in “here” but by how many we are reaching out “there.” How do we change First Baptist Church from a Crowd to an Army? We can’t claim true biblical success unless we are seeing lives changed; lowering our divorce rates; seeing crime decline; seeing men staying married to their wives and investing their lives in helping to raise their children; seeing the rate of teenage pregnancy decline... **THE MINISTRY OF OUR CHURCH MUST GET BEYOND OUR PROPERTY.** One pastor asked a very compelling question: “Do you see your neighbors as “problems to be removed,” “people to be avoided,” or “people to be loved with the message of Jesus Christ.”

- **WE MUST REMEMBER: WE MUST REACH THE YOUNGER GENERATION TO SECURE THE FUTURE:** We have, without apology, invested money in staff and resources to refocus our ministry and place a priority on reaching our children and students. We realized a few years ago that we must change our strategy when it comes to reaching our younger generation. Sadly the national statistics do not lie when they tell us that **75% of our kids quit going to church after they leave home for college or work.** We have made a conscious decision to not only change our strategy in reaching children and students but to disciple our students not only with the word but also to encourage them to develop their leadership skills by volunteering and we encourage them to find a place of service.

**THE TRAIN...** (Acts 11:22-26)

“News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. **23 When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.** **24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.** **25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,** **26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” Acts 11:22-26 (NIV)

The leaders of the early church knew the importance of training the believers to become fully devoted followers of Christ and they were sold out to that vision!
Our goal is to train disciples... not to simply win people to Christ so they just come to church and be spectators. We must win people and train them to be fully devoted followers of Christ if we are have the impact on our city the early church did on Antioch.

Here is our problem today. We have a culture where American Christians have all types of Christian content available through books, video and electronically. While in many respects that is a great tool, if we are not careful we will create a culture of “Spiritual Do-It-Yourselfers!” WE SEEM TO BE CREATING A SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF NO ACCOUNTABILITY. In America we have the freedom to do what we want and when we want. However, if we are not accountable to spiritual leadership and make ourselves accountable to other believers then the church will grow weak and lack spiritual vitality.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life give us the results of their poll:4

- 28% of Americans have abandoned their faith they received as children
- Of the people that have abandoned their faith 31% are under age 30 and 71% are under age 50. (This tells us about the future of faith in America)
- 60% of American Christians say the most important thing about being a Christian is: “believing in God.”

That sounds good right? However, if that is what you believe then you are saying that Jesus Christ is not the center focus of your faith. In a culture today that values tolerance over truth you can say you believe in God and no one will get offended. Almost everyone says they believe in God. However, if you say, “I believe in Jesus Christ and I’m a follower of Christ because Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and life and no one comes to the Father but by me” then you are automatically perceived as being “intolerant.” That is why, when looking at the future of our ministry I tell you again... “IT'S TIME TO BE _______!”

We are so afraid about losing some friends or even losing a job because we would dare to boldly speak about Jesus Christ but the Christians in Antioch as well as the early Christians we learned about last week were boldly telling people about Christ and they were losing their lives! THAT IS THE REASON THE GOSPEL SPREAD LIKE A WILDFIRE BECAUSE JESUS MEANT MORE TO THEM THAN ANYTHING AND IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL WE WILL MAKE CHRIST JUST ANOTHER ‘PART’ OF OUR LIFE AND NOT THE FOCUS OF OUR LIFE. Our challenge will be to reintroduce people to Jesus Christ and then TRAIN THEM to be fully devoted followers of Christ.

The Christians at Antioch were TRAINED by spiritual leaders so they would be ready to give an account of why they were followers of Christ! What about us? Americans today are illiterate about the Bible. Tragically, most Christians don’t know the basic truths

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4 http://religions.pewforum.org/reports
of the Bible and if we don’t know the word then how are we going to have confidence to defend the truths that we believe unchanging in a constantly changing world? **YOU CAN’T SHARE WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW!**

**How then are we going to TRAIN BELIEVERS?** I want you to hold tight to what I am about to tell you. In the past we have talked about “programs.” We want you to be a part of ‘program’ to help your spiritual growth. However, in order to have a laser focus on training believers to become fully devoted followers of Christ we are going to talk about ‘STEPS,’ not ‘PROGRAMS.’

We have had programs for as long as I can remember and obviously a “program focused strategy” is not achieving what we need in the development of fully devoted followers of Christ. To be a New Testament Christian we must realize that our spiritual walk is a journey, and in order to advance in this journey you have to take STEPS.

I want us to simply our strategy so that when I ask you, “Where are you on your journey with Christ” you can tell me “I am here and I am taking my next step to go there.”

Let’s Review the NEXT STEPS we will encourage you to take in order that we might train a generation to be fully devoted followers of Christ who are influencing the world in which they live.

**STEP ONE: WE BEGIN THE JOURNEY AT “THE STARTING POINT”**

The STARTING POINT will be the FIRST STEP in which we will take folks to help them understand the biblical strategy for following Christ and the structure we will use to help them develop their faith in Jesus Christ.

**STEP TWO: FOCUS ON WHAT WE BELIEVE IN “FOUNDATIONS”**

We will offer four highly focused session that will provide the spiritual basics to help anchor your faith.

- **We will talk about the Bible**, what it is; how it is divided; our historical record; the reliability; how we study the bible.
- **Secondly we will discuss “Worldview.”** What you believe about worldview determines how you behave and the way you behave tells others what you believe.
- **Thirdly we will give the biblical foundation for evangelism and how to share our faith.**
- **Finally we will provide instruction for our Neighborhood ministry.** Through our neighborhood ministry we will demonstrate how a large church in South Florida is attempting to emulate the FIRST CHURCH of the New Testament.
In addition to helping prepare that spiritual maturity in FOUNDATIONS we will also offer what we call “LIFE APPS” that you choose to help you in a specific area of your Christian walk as you continue taking your next step toward spiritual maturity.

STEP THREE: WHERE DO YOU BELONG? “NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS”

This next step is putting feet to our strategy in sending our church from the INSIDE TO THE OUTSIDE. We need one another and our neighborhood group is a place where we get connected. We pray together, we focus on how we can apply the word we heard from the pulpit each week and how we our neighborhood groups can focus on three main points of our mission: WIN-TRAIN-SEND.

STEP FOUR: HOW DO WE BEHAVE AS CHRISTIANS? WE INVEST OUR LIFE BY “VOLUNTEERING”

We realize that the church has often been guilty of finding people who love the Lord and then work them to death. Once again, our new strategy is to be laser focused and encourage your next step to serve in two ways: one in the area of your passion so you won’t burn out and secondly in one area of need, just because something needs to be done so you won’t be selfish.

James reminds us that we must not simply listen to the word but we must “DO” what the word says. Our next step in our journey toward spiritual maturity needs to include volunteering so we can walk the talk!

THE SEND…

The “send” in our mission will be focused to take the next step locally and globally. LOCALLY, we will constantly be looking for ways to “send” our faith into our neighborhood and community; to be the heart and hands of Christ in our witness, without expecting anything in return.

GLOBALLY we will be to continue to be aggressive in our mission efforts. Our global “SEND” strategy is to: EDUCATE our people about our global mission responsibilities; we also suggest that our people to EXPERIENCE global missions by sacrificing their time, talent and treasure to participate in short term mission projects; we will commit to ENCOURAGE the missionaries we have on the field through our prayers and financial support; and we will ENLIST and EQUIP those who feel called of the Lord to full time mission service.

CONCLUSION:
In order to take these NEXT STEPS to go INSIDE OUT we must realize that...

“IT’S TIME TO BE ___________!”

Over the next six weeks I will provide a detailed plan on what it means to go INSIDE OUT. We are sitting in the greatest period in the history of Christianity to have the most significant impact with the Gospel the world has ever known. **But in order to accomplish this we need every one of you to share God’s mission and to join us in taking the next step.** Remember 86% of South Florida does not go to church...WE HAVE AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE US, BUT IN ORDER TO MAKE AN IMPACT IN THEIR LIVES WE MUST SHOW THEM THE JOURNEY IS WORTH THEIR INVESTMENT AND INVITE THEM TAKE THE NEXT STEP WITH JESUS CHRIST....AND WITH US!